

Why has not the change been made?

Will you through these pages kindly shed some light on the subject and thus bring it to the attention of the A. O. U.?

It seems desirable to have some fixed arrangement for the convenience of all.

The choice in this locality appears to be for the metric system.

WILLIAM FLINT.

Oakland, Cal.

NOTES AND NEWS.

SPENCER FULLERTON BAIRD died suddenly at Wood's Hill, Mass., August 19, in his sixty-fifth year, after suffering for many months from seriously impaired health. In his death American ornithology has lost its time honored leader, and zoological science one of its most powerful and unselfish promoters. Although occupied during the later years of his life with engrossing executive cares attending two of the most important positions of scientific responsibility to which a naturalist could be called—those of Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and head of the United States Fish Commission—his impress upon American zoölogy is perhaps unequalled by that of any other naturalist, living or deceased. His published works on the mammals, birds, reptiles, and fishes of North America were for a long period of years the standard authorities of the subject, and will always hold the place of classics. His influence upon the progress of ornithology in America is beyond comparison, his work of thirty years ago forming the basis of nearly all subsequent advance. But his influence was by no means restricted to his published writings, he having been the instigator and organizer of ornithological explorations extending throughout the North American continent. To his influence with the government authorities is due the excellent field work done in connection with nearly all the Government Surveys and the Signal Service Bureau, from the first inception of the various Pacific Railroad Surveys to the present time. The immense resources thus gathered into the National Museum have rendered possible the rapid progress in our knowledge of North American birds which has especially marked the last two decades.

In Professor Baird every rising naturalist has found a friend, ever ready to render all possible assistance and encouragement. Many owe to him opportunities for prosecuting distant explorations, or the material for monographic work. His one object, to which he was most disinterestedly devoted, was the advancement of science, and every effort to that end was sure of his generous encouragement. To the American Orni-

thologists' Union he was ever a friend, giving it from the first his hearty support, and rendering, as one of its Councilors, efficient aid in directing its affairs.

At the meeting of the A. O. U., soon to be held in Boston, a memorial address will be delivered by one eminently qualified to speak of his scientific work and worth. This address will doubtless be published in the next (January) number of 'The Auk,' rendering further notice of our great Nestor unnecessary in the present connection.

THE Fifth Congress of the American Ornithologists' Union will convene in Boston, Mass., Oct. 11, 1887. The meetings will be held in the Lecture Room of the Boston Society of Natural History. The presentation of ornithological papers will form a prominent feature of the meetings, although other important matters will come up for action. A large attendance of both Active and Associate Members is anticipated.

OWING to continued ill health and the pressure of other engagements, the present editor of 'The Auk' finds himself compelled to sever his editorial connection with this journal with the close of the present volume.

THE Index to Vol. IV of 'The Auk,' owing to unexpected and unavoidable delay in its preparation, is necessarily omitted from the present number. If not issued separately within the next few weeks, it will accompany the number for January, 1888.

FOR the portrait of the late Professor Baird, forming the frontispiece to the present number, 'The Auk' is indebted to the generosity of Prof. G. Brown Goode, through the solicitation of Dr. Coues.

IT HAS been proposed to erect a monument in New York City in memory of John J. Audubon, in connection with the removal of his remains from an old family vault in Trinity Cemetery, rendered necessary by proposed street alterations. A plot of ground has been offered for the purpose at the head of Audubon Avenue. The matter has been recently mentioned in 'Science' and other journals, and a resolution endorsing the project was adopted by the American Association for the Advancement of Science at its meeting recently held in New York. The subject is one in which it becomes ornithologists to take a lively interest.

MR. MONTAGUE CHAMBERLAIN, of St. John, N. B., has sent to the printer 'An Annotated Catalogue of the Birds of Canada.' The 'Catalogue' will include the whole area of Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and north to the Arctic Coast. Its publication may be looked for early in October.

As is well known, Dr. Edgar A. Mearns, U. S. A., stationed at Fort Verde, Arizona, is making extensive natural history explorations in Ari-

zona, the ornithology of the region receiving special attention. During the past summer he has been able to make several extended and very successful expeditions into the more unexplored parts of the Territory, including the Matatzal and Mongollon Mountains. Large shipments of specimens received from him at the American Museum of Natural History attest his industry and success. He intends later to make them the basis of elaborate papers, giving the results of his several years' natural history work in the Territory.

THE Report of the Ornithologist to the Department of Agriculture, Dr. C. Hart Merriam, for the year 1886, which has recently come to hand, not only reviews the work of the year, but contains what may be considered as a preliminary report of extended investigations upon the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*). The results stated are of startling importance and suggestiveness. The report gives a brief history of its introduction, rate of increase, method of diffusion, and its destructive proclivities. An accompanying map shows its distribution in the United States at the close of the year 1886, when the area occupied by it is given as 885,000 square miles in the United States and about 148,000 square miles in Canada, or a total of 1,033,000 square miles over which it has spread in North America, mainly during the present decade. It now has overspread not only all the region east of the Mississippi River, except a narrow border along the Gulf Coast, but nearly all of Missouri, a large part of Kansas, Iowa, and considerable areas in Nebraska, Minnesota, Utah, and California. It proves to be not only an enemy of several of our most valued song birds, but exceedingly injurious to the gardener and fruit grower, especially grape-culturists, and also extends its ravages to grain fields. It proves to be not only a complete failure as a destroyer of insects, but is charged with actually causing an increase of one of our most noxious caterpillar pests. Many abstracts of testimony on these points, from many and widely distant sources, are given in the Report, which submits a series of recommendations to legislators, and to the people in reference to the Sparrow question. To quote from the Report: "The English Sparrow is a curse of such virulence that it ought to be systematically attacked and destroyed before it becomes necessary to deplete the public treasury for the purpose, as has been done in other countries. By concerted action, and by taking advantage of its gregarious habits, much good may be accomplished with little or no expenditure of money." Methods are then suggested for its destruction.

The ravages of the Rice-bird (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) in the rice fields of the South are then detailed, these involving, it is estimated, a loss of millions of dollars annually to the rice-growers.